

Trip 2 – Episode #26 – Tucson & A Lotta Cacti!

After Tombstone, we headed toward Tucson. More great landscapes along the way.



We stayed in a KOA called Lazy Days, which was huge but well maintained. The first night it provided a fine sunset.



But the thing that was most memorable and most appreciated was the fact that they had orange, lemon and grapefruit trees throughout the park and we were told to help ourselves.



Living true to our mantra, we seized the opportunity. They were delicious!



We also seized the opportunity to finally deal with the propane/ carbon monoxide alarm issue, which had been unaddressed since San Antonio.



I won't get into details (it's much too boring) but the main point is that we spent a considerable amount of time in Tucson trying to address the problem. And finally we did.

Partly as a result, we didn't really "explore" Tucson. But in truth we haven't been exploring any cities in depth, not wanting to get too close to too many people. So we just drove around to get a sense of Tucson. And here's a bit of what we saw.

One of the first things that struck us was the presence of these huge cacti, which we later learned were Saguaro cacti. (Pronounced suh·waa·row) To see them around town was really surprising. They weren't just around houses but also public buildings downtown.





As for architecture, there was lots of variety, stemming no doubt from the influences from different communities – including Mexican and Indigenous peoples.







And there was some interesting public art.





This piece of public art intrigued me and when I looked it up, I found a good story. It's called Many Color Mountain and it's meant to represent how the changing light reflects a variety of colours on the mountains surrounding Tucson at different times of the day.

But the other thing that was interesting was something we couldn't see from the road.



One the backside of the “mountains” are handprints. Apparently, people who work in the nearby public library, in the shopping center across the street, and the kids in the school down the road, were all invited to leave their handprints on the walls. Nice.



After only a couple of days in Tucson, we moved on, heading toward the Saguaro National Forest.

On the way, we passed Old Tucson which is a kind of an amusement park but has also served as a location site for over 400 movies and TV series. I was there years ago for a commercial shoot. Today, partly because of COVID, it's shut down "indefinitely".



Fortunately, the Saguaro National Forest is thriving. What an amazing place!





You drive through miles and miles of these “forests” before you get to the National Park sign, which is supposed to signify the entrance.



And then there are just more and more forests of cacti. So you drive on and on...



And on ...



Until you get to the Visitor Center, where there are even more.



At the elegant visitor center, we learned that these cacti will start to produce their first flowers by the time they're about 35 years old. And they don't sprout their first "arms" till they're 95 to 100 years old. They can live to be about 200!



The gardens were lovely and had all kinds of interesting looking cacti, like this Cholla.



And, as Jim
points out,
there are
more...





And
more...











Finally, at least one of us had had enough cacti.



As extraordinary as the Saguaro National Forest was, we had another destination ahead, so we hit the Open Range. (We don't actually know what that sign meant, except maybe that we should expect to see cattle roaming on the road. We didn't.)



We also didn't know why this portion of a plane was right beside the road.

Once again I did some research (thank you Google) and discovered that we were near the Pinal Airpark. Described as “a boneyard for civilian commercial aircraft”, it's basically a place where old aircraft are stored and usually scrapped. Because of the dry climate in the desert, there's little corrosion, so parts can be reused or sold.



A while later, we got to Casa Grande in Arizona. We stayed in the very busy Fiesta Grande RV Resort.



It had a nice pool (which I did take advantage of) and lots of other activities like pickle ball and jam sessions and happy hours (which we didn't take advantage of).



The “resort” was more like a neighbourhood, because a lot of people live in “manufactured homes”. These are homes that are completely constructed in a factory, and built on a chassis rather than a foundation, so they are technically mobile. But these days, most are never intended to be moved. Many people live in them year-round, or at least throughout the winter.



The main reason we stopped in Casa Grande was to meet with old friends, Kathy Johnson and Rod St. Amand. Kathy and I went to Ryerson a million years ago and we hadn't seen each other in some time. It was great to catch up with them.



Oh, and one other exciting thing happened: I got a hat!

Next up ... The Middle of Nowhere and the Centre of the World!

In the same blog!

